GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:67
ANSWERED ON:24.02.2016
Net Neutrality
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has finalised any policy decision on the net neutrality after public consultation;

(b) if so, the details and the outcome thereof;

(c) the Government"s view on the Free Basic service launched by Facebook and the steps taken in this regard;

(d) the Government"s position on regulation of Voice over Internet Services that are in direct competition with the voice services provided by the telecom operators who pay a license fee for provision of services; and

(e) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to make internet services available to every citizen in the country?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) & (b) No, Madam.

Government policy on Net Neutrality shall be finalized after taking into account recommendations of committee constituted by Department of Telecommunication, recommendations of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and other inputs to the Government. TRAI recommendations on the issue are awaited.

(c) Free Basics is type of Zero-Rated Platform from Facebook in partnership with Telecom/ Internet Service Providers, in which select websites/ applications on internet are provided free to the customers.

Recently, TRAI has issued the "Prohibition of Discriminatory Tariffs for Data Services Regulations, 2016" on 8th February 2016, wherein following is mandated:
i. No service provider shall offer or charge discriminatory tariffs for data services on the basis of content.
ii. No service provider shall enter into any arrangement, agreement or contract, by whatever name called, with any person, natural or legal, that has the effect of discriminatory tariffs for data services being offered or charged by the service provider for the purpose of evading the prohibition in this regulation.
iii. Reduced tariff for accessing or providing emergency services, or at times of public emergency has been permitted.

(d) TRAI has issued a consultation paper "Regulatory Framework for Over the Top (OTT) Service" on 27.03.2015, which includes regulatory treatment of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). Government will take a position on this aspect after the outcome of this consultation process of TRAI.

(e) In its endeavor to make internet services available to every citizen in the country, Government has planned to connect all the 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats in the country through optical fibre, utilizing existing fibres of PSUs viz. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited(BSNL), RailTel and Power Grid Corporation of India (PGCIL)and laying incremental fibre wherever necessary. This activity is being executed by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) namely Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) under BharatNet / National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project. The project is being funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF). NonÂ¬discriminatory access to the network will be provided to all the telecom service providers.

Apart from BharatNet / NOFN project, Government through USOF has also undertaken rural wireline broadband scheme at pan India level and optical fibre network augmentation schemes in Assam and North East region for making internet services available in every part of the country.

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